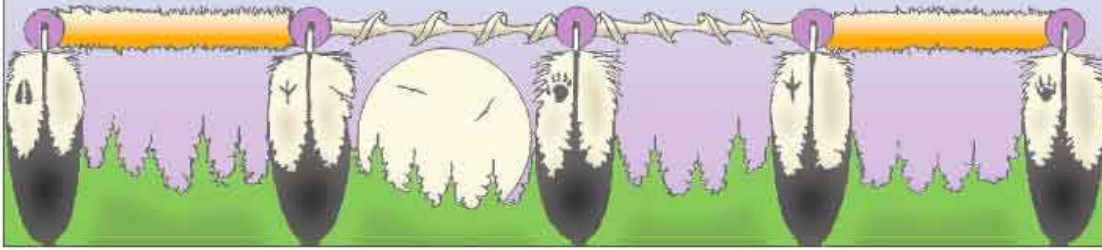


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Vice presidential candidate old foe to some in Indian Country

By Brian Stockes

Today staff-Washington Bureau

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WASHINGTON – Senator Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., Al Gore's running mate, is no stranger to some in Indian country.

Over the past three years, Sen. Lieberman has been the Senate's number one advocate for reform of the federal government's land-to-trust process, the primary mechanism used by tribes to acquire new lands.

In 1997 Lieberman proposed legislation, the Indian Trust Lands Reform Act, to limit the ability of tribes to take land into trust. The bill was proposed in response to an ongoing controversy in his home state of Connecticut where the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe petitioned the Secretary of the Interior several times to take off-reservation lands into trust. The controversy blossomed into a full blown legal challenge.

"The Mashantucket Pequot Tribe

See **LIEBERMAN** page 4.

Eagle Soaring high once again

By Yvonne M. Matson
Menominee Nation News

An eagle that was found by the Smokey Falls cut across earlier this spring was set free on August 14, 2000 by the County M bridge.

The 3 1/2 year-old bald eagle was

spotted on April 16th by Brian and Pete White of Keshena when it ran across the road in front of their vehicle. Brian said his brother Pete left the area to notify Menominee Conservation Officers while he "stayed far enough away until Conservation came."

The injured eagle was transported

to a rehabilitation facility in Antigo, the Raptor Education Group, Inc., where it recovered fully, much to the surprise of Executive Director Marjorie Gibson. "This one was special because he really came through so much," said Gibson.

According to Gibson, the eagle probably spent most of the winter on the ground – approximately 4 months before it was discovered.

The right wing was fractured near

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MNN/Y.M. Matson

Marjorie Gibson, Executive Director of Raptor Education Group, Inc., an Antigo based facility, embraces a once injured bald eagle before it is released back into its' natural environment.

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EAGLE:

the joint. Another minor fracture on the same wing was discovered and had already begun to heal on its' own.

Menominee Conservation Officers were very pleased with the care given to the eagle by Marjorie. "She (Marjorie) was so gentle with the eagle and treated it like it was one of her babies," said Don Waukechon. A monitoring device was attached, enabling the eagle to be monitored for 1 year.

There were approximately twenty people on site during the early morning release including respected elder Earl Wescott, Sr. who reminded those present that the "eagle is very sacred to our people, we're proud that (they) were able to cure him."

Dave Grignon said a prayer before the majestic beauty was released back into the wild by Mr. Wescott. At right, Ms. Gibson welcomes the attention given to the majestic beauty by Brian White and 5 year-old Ashley Smith.

LIEBERMAN:

is extraordinarily wealthy," Lieberman said in testimony before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs in 1998.

"It runs one of the most successful gaming operations in the country with a reported annual revenue of \$1 billion. I question the policy of the United States to change the boundaries of three Connecticut towns unilaterally so that a wealthy tribe can expand its gaming or other business enterprises, free of taxes and local land-use controls."

Problems began when Interior granted two applications for the Pequot to receive trust land in the mid-1990s. The Connecticut towns of Ledyard, North Stonington and Preston, as well as the state attorney general, then challenged one of the land acquisitions in federal court, embroiling the tribe, the federal government, the state and local communities in a battle over tribal land acquisition and the scope of the federal government's land-to-trust policy.

Lieberman claimed his legislation was necessary to protect the control of local communities and their tax base.

"The effect of the tribe's and the department's decisions involving off-reservation lands has been unsettling, to say the least," Lieberman said. "Many residents are afraid that if the tribe is able to continue taking off-reservation land off the local tax rolls and immunize it from local zoning control, they will not have any control over the future of their towns."

If Lieberman's bill were to have passed it would have unilaterally prohibited the Secretary of the Interior from taking land into trust on behalf of any "economically self-sufficient Indian tribe if the lands were to be used for commercial use." This legislation would not have only impacted the Pequot and communities of Connecticut, but every tribe and state in the country.

Tribes were granted the ability to gain trust land in 1934 when the Indian Reorganization Act was passed to address the problems caused by the allotment era and the fractionation of Indian land in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

At the time, the total acreage of tribal lands had dwindled to their lowest points and many communities lay on the edge of collapse. Through mandates under the Indian Reorganization Act, Congress granted the Secretary of the Interior the authority to take land into trust for tribal governments to increase the tribal land base.

The federal government then held title in the tribe's name to ensure that the land would not be sold or lost. Most land taken into trust is comprised of land within the tribe's aboriginal territory. Since 1934, tribes have successfully been using the land-to-trust policy to regain land, develop infrastructure, and pursue economic development.

Officials say there have been very few problems associated with the policy; however, the growth and expansion of tribal gaming has caused some recent tensions over tribal land use. While restrictions on Indian land acquisitions and gaming activities have long been a part of federal gaming laws, Lieberman's bill would have extended these restrictions to all land intended for commercial use, even if they were used for non-gaming purposes. Lieberman's proposal would have also set in place a new undefined standard: "economically self-sufficient tribe."

Gore has not commented on Lieberman's stance regarding land into trust, but has expressed strong support for tribal sovereignty and economic development, including tribal gaming. "One of my main objectives is assisting tribal governments to develop the infrastructure needed for economic development," Gore said in response to an on-line, town hall question. "Indian country can count on me to continue the fight so that gaming can be used as a tool for economic opportunity."

Vice President Gore is touting a strong stance when it comes to Indian issues, so it is important that he maintains his support in Indian country.

Lieberman's proposed legislation never made it through the Senate for a vote, but caused many within Congress to take a new look at the land-to-trust process. His stance may also be cause for a new look from Indian country at the Gore campaign now that Lieberman is on the ticket.

